

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A process for accelerating the maturation of an unaged or partially aged beverage comprising:

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- (a) determining a target concentration of ethyl acetate for the product of said maturation;
- 10 (b) providing an unaged or partially aged beverage with from about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to about  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  grams/100 PL of ethyl acetate in excess of said target concentration;
- 15 (c) flowing said beverage of step (b) through a closed system wherein said closed system comprises a beverage aging wood product such that a beverage passing through said system contacts said wood product; and
- 20 (d) processing said beverage in the presence of oxygen for a period of time sufficient to produce a matured beverage;

wherein said beverage-aging wood product is prepared by the process of:

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- (i) comminuting raw, untreated wood into granules;
- 25 (ii) heating said granules to a temperature of from about  $100^{\circ}$  C to about  $240^{\circ}$  C for a period of at least one hour;
- (iii) contacting the granules with a solution of aqueous ethanol containing from about 50% to about 95% ethanol at a temperature of up to about  $55^{\circ}$  C;
- 30 (iv) separating the granules from the solution; and

(v) heating the granules to a temperature of up to about 220° C for a period of at least about 15 minutes.

5 2. The process of claim 1, wherein said beverage aging wood product is contained in an interchangeable cartridge.

10 3. The process of claim 1, wherein said system comprises a pump for circulating said beverage in said system.

15 4. The process of claim 1, wherein said system comprises an inlet for injecting gas or air into said system.

20 5. The process of claim 1, wherein said system comprises a heat exchanger configured to control the temperature of a beverage in said system.

25 6. The process of claim 1, wherein said system is configured to flush said wood product after a processing run.

7. The process of claim 1, wherein said system comprises a filter configured to filter said beverage during or after the maturation processing.

30 8. The process of claim 1, wherein said system comprises a valve for sampling said beverage during processing.

9. The process of claim 1, wherein said beverage is an ethanolic beverage.

5 10. The process of claim 1, wherein said beverage is a brown distilled spirit.

11. The process of claim 1 wherein said beverage is processed at a temperature of from about 70° to about 170° F.

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12. A process according to claim 1, wherein from about a trace to about 250 grams per 100 PL ethyl acetate are added to the beverage prior to processing.

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13. A process according to claim 1, wherein from about 2 to about 30 grams per 100 PL ethyl acetate are added to the beverage prior to processing.

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14. A process according to claim 6, wherein water used to flush said wood product is combined with the mature beverage to obtain a diluted matured beverage.

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15. A matured beverage obtained by the process of claim 1.

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16. A beverage of claim 15, wherein said matured beverage is blended with one or more beverages.

17. A beverage of claim 15, wherein said beverage is a concentrated beverage.

18. A beverage flavor transfer cartridge configured to fluidly connect into a beverage maturation processing system, wherein said cartridge contains a beverage aging wood product in an amount effective to mature a predetermined amount of unaged, or partially aged beverage.

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19. A cartridge of claim 18, wherein said wood product is prepared by a process comprising:

10 (a) comminuting raw, untreated wood into granules;

15 (b) heating said granules to a temperature of from about 100° C to about 240° C for a period of at least one hour;

20 (c) contacting the granules with a solution of aqueous ethanol containing from about 50% to about 95% ethanol at a temperature of up to about 55° C;

(d) separating the granules from the solution; and

(e) heating the granules to a temperature of up to about 220° C for a period of at least about 15 minutes.

20. A method of maturing an ethanolic beverage to achieve a desired organoleptic character

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(a) combining

(i) a quantity of a raw distillate for maturation;

(ii) an amount of a beverage-aging wood product sufficient to effect the maturation; and

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(iii) from about 2 to about 100 grams of ethyl acetate per 100° proof liter of the raw distillate; and

(b) processing said beverage under conditions effective to produce the maturation of the ethanolic beverage.

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21. The method of claim 20, wherein said beverage is a brown distilled spirit or a concentrate of a brown distilled spirit.

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22. The method of claim 20, wherein said beverage is Bourbon, Scotch, Irish, rye, Canadian or other whiskey, rum, tequila, brandy, cognac, armagnac, liqueur, mescal, eau de vie, aguardiente, or shogu (shouchuu).

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23. In a maturation process for producing an aged ethanolic beverage, the improvement which comprises

adding ethyl acetate prior to or during the maturation process in a quantity sufficient to accelerate the maturation.

*B added*